

Common Respiratory Illnesses

Symptom	COVID-19 ^(1,2)	Influenza ^(1,2)	Pertussis ⁽³⁾	Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) ^(4,5)	
Fever	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	
Chills	Common	Common	Uncommon	Uncommon	
Headache	Common	Common	Uncommon	Uncommon	
Muscle aches and pains, chest discomfort	Common; mild to severe	Common; often severe	Uncommon	Uncommon	
Fatigue and weakness	Mild-severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Moderate-severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Mild; Patient usually appears well between coughing attacks	Mild	
Extreme exhaustion	Common	Common early in illness	Uncommon	Common	
Stuffy or runny nose	Common	Common	Common, early in the illness	Common	
Sneezing	Uncommon	Uncommon	Common, early in the illness	Common, 1-3 days after symptom onset	
Sore throat	Common	Common	Uncommon	Common	
Other symptoms (not exhaustive)	Vomiting, diarrhea, loss of taste and smell	Vomiting, diarrhea (more common in children)	Apnea – a pause in breathing (in infants)	bronchiolitis and pneumonia, more common in infants	
COUGH	Character	Hacking cough, often productive	Non-productive (“dry”) cough is typical	Coughing fits/paroxysms and nocturnal cough are common; often leads to vomiting or gagging; generally not responsive to over the counter cough medications; “whooping” may or may not occur	Hacking cough, often with wheezing
	Severity	Mild to severe	Moderate	Variable; mild to severe; infants appear quite ill and may present with cough or apnea	Severe
	Duration	Typically 3-7 days, may last for weeks	Typically 3-7 days; occasionally to 14 days	Persistent. Almost always >1 week, usually 2-6 weeks, sometimes 10+ weeks	Typically 3-7 days, may last for weeks
	Paroxysms	Uncommon	Uncommon	Common; often leads to vomiting or gagging	Uncommon
Infectious period	2 day before symptom onset and 10 days after	1 day before symptom onset and 3-7 days after	From start of catarrhal phase (before cough onset) to 21 days after cough onset*; Most efficient spreading after cough onset	3-8 days, may be longer in infants or immunocompromised individuals	
Incubation period	2-14 days	1-4 days	6-20 days	4-6 days	
Vaccines available	COVID-19 vaccines	Seasonal influenza vaccine	DTaP and Tdap	No vaccine currently available	
Suggested diagnostic testing	Testing – Antigen or PCR	Testing – Antigen or PCR	Testing – PCR recommended for acute illness	Testing – Antigen or PCR for acute illness	

*or until taking 5 days of appropriate antibiotics, or until a nasopharyngeal pertussis PCR is negative



References

1. Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19 | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>
2. Symptoms of COVID-19 | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
3. Signs and Symptoms of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about/signs-symptoms.html>
4. RSV in Infants and Young Children | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/infants-young-children.html>
5. Symptoms and Care of RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/symptoms.html>